

A photograph of two Black women sitting outdoors, laughing and embracing each other. The woman on the left has short, curly dark hair and is wearing a green and white striped sleeveless top. The woman on the right has long, curly dark hair and is wearing a solid green top. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The background shows green foliage and a wooden railing.

love is
respect.

Love Like That

love is respect | Helper Guide

2024

TDVAM

What is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month?

love is respect, a project of the **National Domestic Violence Hotline** (The Hotline), began in 2007 as a response to a national discourse about the need for dating abuse prevention services, especially among teens and young adults. Every February, love is respect brings awareness to teen dating violence and unites teens, young adults, and those who support them in a national effort to promote healthy relationships and prevent future abuse.

Teen dating violence is more common than many people think. **One in three teens in the U.S. will experience physical, sexual, or emotional abuse from someone they are in a relationship with before they become adults.** On average, [one in ten high school students](#) experienced physical abuse from their dating partner at some point within the past year. Nearly half (43%) of college women report experiencing violent and abusive dating behaviors.

This guide includes:

- Introduction to the 2024 Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month theme
- Messages from our Youth Council
- Types of abuse
- Common dating terms youth use
- Helping teens and young adults identify Love Languages®
- Talking to teens and young adults about sexual boundaries and safety
- Title IX and the red zone
- Supporting populations on the margins
- Resources

Teenagers and young people also experience abuse online and on social media. Victims of digital abuse and harassment are twice as likely to be physically abused, [twice as likely to be psychologically abused](#), and five times as likely to be sexually coerced. This guide provides information for those looking to support teens and young adults to prevent and end dating abuse.

If you are a parent looking to support your child, a teen, or a young adult in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, love is respect's [parent guide](#), created in partnership with the Allstate Foundation, is a valuable resource available for free—download your copy today.





A Message from Our Partners at The Gabby Petito Foundation

For many, “love like that” is often connected to someone else. But it is equally important to let your loved one know the person staring in the mirror most deserves that love. Let your teen or young adult know:

- You have the right to be treated with respect, acceptance, trust, and unconditional love.
- Do not let anyone love bomb into your heart.
- It’s NOT okay for your partner to check your phone, share private photos of you, call you names, control your friendships, use physical violence, get angry often, or threaten you.

You have the power to write your story from beginning to end. Don’t ever let anyone take that from you.

The Gabby Petito Foundation

The Gabby Petito Foundation turns tragedy into purpose by supporting locating missing persons and those impacted by domestic violence.

An Introduction to Our Theme

Messages from Our Youth Council

We are delighted to announce that the theme of **2024 Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM)** is “**Love Like That**” (**#LoveLikeThat**). Our National Youth Council members chose this theme to illuminate what “that” means regarding healthy and unhealthy relationships.

We know love is more than a feeling; no matter how you define it, it’s essential to ensure you’re on the same page with your partner about the definitions and boundaries of your relationship. **Teens and young adults express their love for one another in many ways, which differ from person to person or community.**

All expressions of love are valid as long as they respect the boundaries of our partners, and the most crucial aspect is whether the actions taken to express and show love are healthy.



What I find most helpful from the adults in my life when supporting me around healthy relationships is not getting lectured. Instead, having a mature conversation makes me feel safe to open up to them.

Kristi C,
24 years old, Ewa Beach, HI.



The best way for adults, parents, teachers, and mentors to support youth is by modeling healthy relationships and having frequent, meaningful, two-way conversations.

These conversations can include boundaries, why they are essential, what they can look like, consent and the right to bodily autonomy in any relationship, red flags of abuse, and how to protect yourself from it.

Many communities still have a heavy stigma regarding consent, rape, and sex. However, adults can help break this pattern through open dialogue with teens.

Jessica K,
16 years old, Freemont, CA.



Youth Dating and Types of Abuse

Dating abuse is a pattern of hurtful behaviors used to exert power and control over a dating partner, often through isolation and intimidation. When people hear about abuse, they often assume it involves physical violence, but that's not always the case.

Abuse can take many forms. Understanding the [common types of abuse](#) can help you recognize them when you see them. You can also refer to love is respect's [parent guide](#) for more details about how each type of abuse may appear in relationships.

Common Dating Terms Youth Use

At love is respect, we use the gender-neutral term “partners” to refer to people in intimate relationships. However, youth might use a different term for their relationships depending on the circumstances, such as:

- **Cuffing** often refers to ‘cuffing season,’ when people tend to partner up for the winter months, like a dating hibernation.
- **Pocketing** is when someone keeps a person they are dating separate, or “pocketed,” from the rest of their life. For example, not introducing them to their friends, inviting them to events, or mentioning their relationship on social media.
- **Hanging out** or “dating without dating” is when two people spend time together, but neither is committed to anything serious.
- **Talking** is when two people are romantically interested in each other but are not dating or “hanging out.”
- **Breadcrumbing** involves sending flirtatious, sporadic, and non-committal text messages to keep a romantic interest alive without effort.
- **Ghosting** is when someone ends all contact without explanation — profile unmatched, messages unanswered, calls avoided.
- **Situationship** is a romantic or sexual relationship where both partners do not clearly define the relationship status.

Helping Teens and Young Adults Identify Love Languages®

Everyone shows love differently and may have different needs from their partners regarding those expressions of love. **Love Languages®** play a significant role in how individuals give and receive love. It is essential to understand your love language and the love language of those you support.

One of the most insightful realizations that can come from learning about the five **Love Languages®** is the ability to fully see all the ways you, as a helper or parent, show love to your child, teen, or young adult in your life and how you support them on their journey towards a healthy relationship.





Talking to Teens and Young Adults About Sexual Boundaries and Safety

Ensuring youth understand their [physical boundaries](#) and know [how to set boundaries](#) with their partners is crucial. As a helper, you can support them by having conversations about their boundaries and connecting them to resources to educate themselves. It's important to encourage teens and young adults to recognize signs of [sexual coercion](#) and understand when their boundaries are violated.

There are several different boundaries individuals may set around their bodies. If someone is being unkind or shaming their body, they can speak up and set boundaries. It is important to remind young people that honoring who they are and speaking up when they are uncomfortable is empowering. This is an act of standing in their truth.

Sex is a normal and natural thing for teens or young adults to explore or be curious about. It is important to support youth and have conversations about safe sex and sexual boundaries without shaming their choices. The most important aspect of any sexual encounter is that it feels safe, and they feel their boundaries are heard and respected.

Title IX and the Red Zone

Every fall, between when students return to college campuses and Thanksgiving Break, marks the [Red Zone](#). This term refers to when college campus sexual assaults are at an all-time high—more than [50% of on-campus assaults](#) occur during this time each school year. As a helper or supporter, educating the youth in your life about the red zone and discussing ways teens or young adults can stay safe at parties, with acquaintances, and when walking alone on campus is essential.

If the youth in your life are in school and need help, the [Title IX](#) office supports victims of sexual assault and intimate partner violence in schools and on campuses.

Resources

Supporting Youth on the Margins

Supporting youth who are members of marginalized communities may look different than helping individuals outside of those communities. Communities on the margins face unique barriers that may impact their ability to get support. They may also face additional challenges that are important to understand when providing support around their relationships.

Read these articles for tips on supporting youth in various communities:

- [LGBTQIA+ Communities](#)
- [Black Community](#)
- [Asian American Pacific Islander \(APPI\) Communities](#)
- [Deaf Communities](#)
 - [Abuse in the Deaf Community](#)
- [Disability Community](#)
- [Native American Communities](#)
- [Immigrant Communities](#)

Additional Youth Resources

- **LGBT National Help Center:** serving the LGBTQ+ community by providing free, confidential peer support and local resources. Call 1-800-246-7743 or chat lgbthotline.org.
- **Scarleteen:** inclusive, comprehensive, supportive reproductive and relationships info for teens: scarleteen.com
- **StrongHearts:** 24/7 free, confidential, and culturally relevant support for Native American and Alaska Native teens and young adults experiencing dating abuse and sexual violence. Call 844-7NATIVE (762-8483) or chat live at strongheartshelpline.org
- **The Trevor Project:** provides 24/7 confidential crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ+ teens and young adults under 25. Call 1-866-488-7386, text START to 678678, or chat live at thetrevorproject.org.
- **Your Life Your Voice:** supporting parents, families, and children in need. 24/7 hotline, text, or email. yourlifeyourvoice.org
- **Knowyourix:** Know Your IX works to educate students nationwide about their civil right to education free from sexual violence and harassment. knowyourix.org/
- **Cyber Civil Rights Initiative:** Emotional support, technical advice, and information to current victims of online abuse. Provides access and communication to victims of nonconsensual pornography (NCP) 24/7 via phone, email, and chat. Call 844-878-CCRI. cybercivilrights.org



love is respect is here for you

love is respect is a safe, inclusive space where teens and young adults can access information and get support in an environment designed specifically for them.



1.866.331.9474



loveisrespect.org



LOVEIS to 22522



A project of the National Domestic Violence Hotline, love is respect offers 24/7 information, support, and advocacy to young people between the ages of 13 and 26 who have questions or concerns about their romantic relationships.



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